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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH DFM RYABKOV: POST-START,
MISSILE DEFENSE, IRAN, MEPP, SANCTIONS

REF: STATE 110756

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Beyrle. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told the Ambassador October 24 the GOR had begun studying the post-START Treaty text delivered that morning. But the need to translate the text and the fact that Russia had not received the missile defense (MD) documents meant November 6 would be too soon to hold the next round of strategic discussions with U/S Rood. Ryabkov described his visit to Tehran October 17-19, contending Iran was ready to engage, but noting that they had been critical of Russia's position on the nuclear file, especially Moscow's support for UNSCR 1835. He added that Iran was critical of Russia's support for the Quartet, arguing the Quartet's proposals were outdated. Ryabkov expressed concern at the new sanctions on Rosoboronexport (ROE)(reftel), reiterating GOR arguments that the TOR-M1 was purely a "defensive system." The Ambassador countered FM Lavrov's public statement that the sanctions had no basis in law, noting the clear U.S. legal grounds for the sanctions. End summary.

Post-START "Impressive" but November 6 Date Too Soon

12. (C) In a meeting October 24 with the Ambassador, DFM Ryabkov expressed appreciation at receipt of the post-START Treaty text, labeling the detail in the paper as "impressive" and said the MFA was starting to translate and analyze the text. However, he said it was clear that the Russian side could not be ready to give the kind of thorough response they wanted to provide in time for a November 6 meeting in Paris - all the more so because they still had not seen the MD paper. Emphasizing that the GOR wanted to continue the strategic dialogue, he urged that the postponement of the meeting not be perceived as any kind of negative "signal", just a recognition that Moscow also had a big, complicated interagency process (that he was now in charge of trying to coordinate) and that it would take more time than the days remaining between now and November 6. Ryabkov said the GOR would propose a new date as soon as possible, and would prefer to hold the meeting in Moscow.

Iran

13. (C) Ryabkov elaborated on his trip to Tehran October 17-19, saying it was his first trip there. He had spent three hours meeting with Deputy Secretary of the SNSC Ali Bagheri and then a half-hour "courtesy call" with Saeed Jalili. He then met with Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali Hosseini and other representatives at the Foreign Ministry. He said, unlike previous meetings, his Iranian

interlocutors were less focused on relating the history of the negotiations and more on seeking Russia's views on the P5-plus-1 proposals. They were very critical of Russia's co-sponsorship of UNSCR 1835 and accused Moscow of "hypocritical policies." Ryabkov said they were anxious how unilateral actions by the members of the P5-plus-1 would work in the future, and he pointed to the latest letter to Solana as evidence of the seriousness of Iran's engagement.

14. (C) Ryabkov noted that Russia was in a "precarious position," with both other P5-plus-1 members (except China) and Iran skeptical about its actions. Ryabkov had told the Iranians that UNSCR 1835 had merely been a repeat of Moscow's current approach: time not right for new sanctions, but Iran needed to be more serious in its engagement with the P5-plus-1. Ryabkov pointed to the most recent enactment of U.S. sanctions against Iranian entities to reiterate Russia's argument that such sanctions had a counterproductive effect. He argued that Iran's pace of enrichment was slow, and they were not introducing new centrifuges. He stressed that Iran was "in engagement mood now," and urged the U.S. not to wait for a new Administration to do so.

15. (C) Ryabkov said he had also discussed regional issues, including counternarcotics cooperation in Afghanistan, and the situation in Georgia and the Caucasus. He added that Iran was considering developing a regional initiative, similar to the Caucasus idea proposed by Turkey, but had no details yet.

16. (C) The Iranian officials had been highly critical of

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Russia's engagement in the Quartet, claiming the regional balance had changed and the Quartet ideas were "outdated," Ryabkov said. He had told them Russia stood firm in its support for the Quartet and had noted there would likely be a Quartet meeting soon, with engagement of the parties.

Rosoboronexport Sanctions

17. (C) Ryabkov noted the "harsh" statement by the GOR in response to the new sanctions imposed on ROE (reftel). Saying that ROE was already under sanctions, he asked what the purpose was of reintroducing new sanctions. In response to the Ambassador's reply that they were in response to ROE's sale of the TOR-M1 surface-to-air missile system to Iran, Ryabkov reiterated GOR arguments that the TOR-M1 was a defensive system, intended purely for protective purposes, and was more of a stabilizing than destabilizing influence on the region.

18. (C) The Ambassador pushed back on FM Lavrov's public comment that the sanctions "had no basis in law," noting that the sanctions were fully consistent with U.S. law. He said such arms transfers sent the wrong message to the Iranian regime and were divisive at a time when it was important for us to maintain a unified position.

BEYRLE